



LOGGERHEADLINES

Sea Turtle News from South Carolina

June-July, 2002

Greetings!

The sea turtle season continues with lots of news, as you will see in this issue of *Loggerheadlines*.

Strandings

There were 26 strandings in June, which is below the average of 38 during the previous five years. Of the 19 loggerheads, only two were adults. A parasail boat at Myrtle Beach hit one leatherback, another was the victim of a ship strike in Charleston Harbor and a third leatherback showed no obvious injuries.

There were 20 strandings in July. This is the lowest total since 1993 and well below the 5-year average of 33.8. Unfortunately, five of them were adult females. The low number of strandings in July may be due to a combination of factors, including, some shrimp trawlers continuing to use leatherback sized TEDs, the new requirement for larger TED openings in South Carolina and fewer boats actually working. During aerial surveys of the coast, there were an average of 113 trawlers in June compared to an average of 79 in July.

Rehabilitation

Jean Beasley with the Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Center reports that "**Hilton**" is doing well and "can almost sink to the bottom of his tank." A fishing guide found the 17-inch Kemp's ridley June 6th on Hilton Head Island. **Kim Washok**, with the Coastal Discovery Museum,

transported the turtle to the Topsail, NC Facility. "**Hilton**" may be visited at <http://www.seaturtlehospital.org>

On July 14th a loggerhead was found stranded at the Charleston City Marina. **Mary Ellen Rogers** of the Isle of Palms/Sullivan's Island Turtle Team transported the 26-inch turtle to the South Carolina Aquarium for medical attention. **Steve Vogel** at the Aquarium provided short-term care until **DuBose Griffin** transported the turtle to the Marine Science Center at Daytona Beach, Florida for extended care.

Necropsy Summary

Post-mortems were performed on eleven sea turtles in the months of June and July. Six were loggerheads, three were leatherbacks and two were Kemp's ridleys. All eleven could be classified as dying of either acute or chronic causes. Ten died acutely and one died from a chronic condition. Collisions with boats were known to be the cause of death in three cases and suspected in a fourth. Two sub-adult female leatherbacks killed by boats were pubescent. The other nine animals were immature.

Nesting News

The nesting season is ahead of last season, by about 30% with only three of the beaches below last season. The beaches with nest protection projects comprise 79.5% of the nesting in the state. If this were projected for 100% of the state, the number of nests (at this point in the season) would be 2,627.6. Based

on aerial surveys this summer, the estimated number of nests is 2,618. With August nests left to add in, we will see how close these two estimates remain. Here are the nesting numbers from each of the projects as of the end of July.

This year marks the completion of our intensive aerial beach surveys. When the three years are averaged together, the mean number of nests per season is 2,876. This is slightly below the average for the last set of surveys, which was 3,007. So, the trend is still downward, but not as severe as the drop from the early 1990's.

Nesting Update

Thru 7/31	2002	2001	Increase
Myrtle Beach S. P.	0	0	
Huntington Beach S. P.	7	5	40%
S.C.U.T.E.	76	42	81%
South Island	85	94	-10%
Cape Island	691	522	32%
Lighthouse Island	174	115	51%
Deweese Island	19	5	280%
Sullivans/Isle of Palms	37	19	95%
Folly Beach	43	47	-9%
Kiawah Island	179	152	18%
Seabrook Island	28	16	75%
Botany Bay Isl & Plan	156	127	23%
Edingsville Beach	56	35	60%
Edisto Beach S. P.	57	43	33%
Edisto Beach	90	65	38%
Harbor Island	33	33	0%
Hunting Island	45	42	7%
Fripp Island	24	43	-44%
Pritchards Island	90	61	48%
St. Phillips Island	30	13	131%
Hilton Head Island	169	104	63%
TOTAL	2089	1583	32%

* * *

Regional News

North Carolina

Dr. Matthew Godfrey, North Carolina sea turtle coordinator, reports that they have had a total of 565 loggerhead and 10 green turtle nests. They have also documented 282 strandings. The most recent issue is severe misorientation of hatchlings due to artificial lights from private homes and hotels. They are working with volunteers to seek cooperation with these owners to at least turn off lights when a nearby nest is due to emerge. They will also be seeking legislation on the county level to reduce the amount of nighttime light reaching the beaches during nesting and emergence seasons.

Georgia

Mark Dodd, Georgia Sea Turtle Coordinator, reports that they have documented 231 strandings so far this year. This is higher than the last two years. Also, the nesting season is running about even with last year, but is 18% below the 13-year average.

Kemp's Ridley Nesting Numbers

Sandy MacPherson, National Sea Turtle Coordinator with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, reports 6,434 Kemp's ridley nests were laid on the Mexican coast with 6,326 of them protected in hatcheries. So far, 360,517 hatchlings have been released. Also, 39 Kemp's ridley nests were documented on the Texas coast. Two additional nests were laid in southwest Florida.

Research

Satellite Tracking of Nesting Loggerheads

On the night of July 7th, coastal staff of the Wildlife Diversity Section of DNR assisted by **Mary Catherine Martin** and **Nadera Hoffman**, Cape Romain staff and volunteer, respectively, attached satellite transmitters to five nesting females. The goal of the project is to determine post-nesting movements, migration

routes, and the size and location of foraging areas. Maps of the turtles can be seen at the Caribbean Conservation Corporation web site www.cccturtle.org/sat-sc-2002.htm

The SC DNR also joined with the South Carolina Aquarium for a "Name the Turtles" contest. The winning names were: "Gullah Gal", "Sarah", "Big Mama", "Jessamine" and "Celeste". The photo on page one is of "Sarah", in recognition of **Sarah Dawsey** and her tireless conservation work on Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge.

In-water Sea Turtle Survey

The staff of the Marine Resources Division's in-water turtle survey project extends a heartfelt thank-you to the many volunteers who made sampling this summer an overwhelming success! More than 30 volunteers assisted aboard the four boats involved in surveying the waters between Georgetown, South Carolina and St. Augustine, Florida.

Efforts resulted in the most productive year of sampling in the project's three-year history. The catch rate was virtually identical to the previous two years of the study. Over 700 stations were sampled yielding 263 turtles including loggerheads (249), Kemp's ridleys (12), and green turtles (2). We are confident that blood samples collected from the turtles will provide valuable information such as sex, genetic origin and overall health. All turtles were tagged then released in the hope that future recaptures will provide information on movement patterns.

Pritchards Island/ SC DNR Collaboration

Pritchards staff tagged and biopsied a total of 22 nesting females during the season. The staff applied flipper tags and PIT tags and took small biopsy punches from the trailing edge of the left front flipper. Samples will be sent to the University of South Carolina for DNA analysis. Thanks to SC DNR and **Dr. Al Segars** for supplying training and equipment. – *Amber Von Harten.*

Notes on Folks

Yawkey Wildlife Center summer intern, **Arlette Rogers** is a student at Warren Wilson College in Asheville, North Carolina majoring in environmental education with a second major in biology. While assisting with a workshop for North Carolina teachers on Cape Lookout last summer, she had the unforgettable experience of watching a nesting loggerhead on the beach. The event prompted her to apply for the intern position at Yawkey and to quote Arlette, "this summer adventure."

"This is my dream job come true! It is a magical feeling to reach down into a nest and find a couple of stragglers left behind by their brothers and sisters, watch them wiggle all the way to the ocean, trying to keep your eye on them as long as you can until their little heads coming up for a breath of air are no longer visible. I smile, wish them well, and move on to the next nest."

Congratulations:

Best wishes from the Cape Romain NWR staff and all of us to Sarah Dawsey and family on the birth of a baby girl, **Elizabeth Clare Killian**, born July 17th.

Congratulation also to **Sara Saylor**, who is a rising senior at the School of the Arts, for an article that appeared in *Charleston Magazine*, July-August issue on page 29. Sara has had a Letter of Authorization from the Isle of Palms/Sullivan's Island Turtle Team for three years and has been an eager worker on behalf of the turtles. The article is part of the magazine's Channel Markers segment and has three color photographs, two of which were taken when a female loggerhead laid eggs in the morning daylight. The text tells about local turtle volunteer programs and quotes **Sally Murphy** and **Mary Pringle**. –*Mary Pringle.*

Announcements & Events

Popular SC Aquarium Program

On Saturday, July 27th, the Folly Beach Turtle Team partnered with the South Carolina Aquarium for the second consecutive year of "In Search of Hatchlings". This popular evening program quickly sold out and by the end of the night, 43 fortunate members had the great honor to witness dozens of loggerhead turtle hatchlings on the night of a full Carolina moon!

The Aquarium is truly thankful for the good work and continued support of **Dr. Carole Bennett** and all of the Folly Turtle Team. Remaining program dates are also filled, with a waiting list of 75+ members. We would like to have more turtle leaders volunteer to lead programs in partnership with the Aquarium. If interested, please contact: Christy Schachte at (843)579-8628 or cschachte@scaquarium.org
--Christy Schachte

Telephone Number Change

Effective Monday, August 12, we have **new phone and fax numbers**. Area Code is 843.
Phone:

Sally	953-9014
Joan	953-9015
DuBose	953-9016
Charlotte	953-9017
Fax:	953-9353.

Sally Murphy, *State Coordinator*
Charlotte Hope, *Biologist*
DuBose Griffin, *Intern, Sea Turtle Desk*
Joan Seithel, *Technical Assistant*

If you have questions or comments, please contact:
Endangered Species Office
S. C. Department of Natural Resources
P. O. Box 12559
Charleston, SC 29422-2559
Phone: 843-953-9015
Fax: 843-953-9353
E-mail: sccturtle@mrd.dnr.state.sc.us



Equal Opportunity Agency

COVER PHOTO: "Sarah" the satellite turtle,
by DuBose Griffin